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NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

JOINT FORCES STAFF COLLEGE

JOINT ADVANCED WARFIGHTING SCHOOL



COMBATING NARCO-TERRORISM IN WEST AFRICA

by

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COMBATING NARCO-TERRORISM IN WEST AFRICA

by

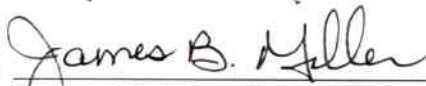
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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes.

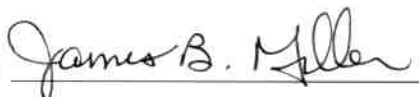
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ABSTRACT

Since 2001, Africa has steadily gained strategic importance to United States' national security interests. Vital humanitarian, security, and economic interests, including long-term access to energy in West Africa, are at risk. Inadequate border and maritime security creates a permissive environment for drug cartels and terrorists to operate and find haven.

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This paper examines the relationship between drug trafficking and terrorism and that it is in the United States interests to combat this emerging threat in West Africa with an emphasis on United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM) taking the lead to improve security in West Africa.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful and lovingly wife Pamela and my family and friends who displayed enormous patience and provide their unconditional support throughout this endeavor. Thank you for sharing the load.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, combating transnational organized crime (TOC), particularly illicit drug trafficking in West Africa, has moved into the foreground of the national security interests of the United States. The illegal drug trade in West Africa represents a global crisis that threatens regional stability, U.S. security, and international norms. A broad range of perils related to TOCs both directly and indirectly affect Americans. The most troublesome byproduct of TOCs involves drug trafficking in that it provides funding for terrorists. Thus, limiting drug trafficking disrupts the ability of both terrorist organizations and transnational drug traffickers to contribute to world instability and its ability to undermine the America's way of life. This thesis examines U.S. policy towards Africa as it relates the threat of transnational drug traffickers as well as international and domestic terrorists, and recommends a new approach to combat this emerging threat.

In the past five years, West Africa has become an integral part of an extensive international illegal drug trafficking enterprise. The region has emerged as a hub for illicit drug trafficking because of weak governance and limited security capacity. This allows drug cartels and terrorist groups to exploit these conditions. Drug trafficking offers terrorist groups a means to generate income thereby increasing their operational capacity. Terrorists use the funds for recruitment, weapons purchase, and to facilitate sophisticated attacks against targets around the world.

West Africa has seen a particular increase in drug trafficking from Latin America because of successful U.S. interdiction in Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Also the increasing demand for cocaine in Europe is another factor. In 2003, only 10 percent of the cocaine destined for the European market moved through

West Africa, but by 2009, the estimate climbed to nearly 60 percent, representing in real terms 180 to 240 metric tons and 18 percent of the total world cocaine production. This alarming trend immediately caught the attention of American policymakers.

In 2008, the 110th Congress passed Public Law 110-417 requiring the Department of Defense (DOD) to report to Congress and develop a counter-narcotics strategy for the West African region.¹ In June, 2009, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee held a hearing entitled *Confronting Drug Trafficking in West Africa*. Senator Paul Feingold expressed his hope to “sound the alarm on these potential threats.”² The hearing emphasized the threat of West African drug trafficking to both African stability and U.S. security and made policy recommendations to combat the threat.

Former DEA administrator, Anthony Placido testified before the House Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs in March 2010. Placido summed up the problem as insurgents and terrorist organizations became more heavily involved in the drug trade. He said, “Hybrid organizations are emerging.” Placido stressed that these hybrid groups “represent the most significant security challenge facing governments globally.”³ During the U.S. Department of State (DOS) Chief of Mission Conference in

¹ Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009, Sen Levin, Carl [MI] (introduced 5/12/2008) Senate Armed Services Senate Reports: 110-335 Became Public Law No: 110-417 In this Act: Division A is Department of Defense Authorizations; Division B is Military Construction Authorizations; and Division C is Department of Energy National Security Authorizations and Other.

² U.S., Congress, Senate, *Confronting Drug Trafficking in West Africa*: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 111th Cong., 1st sess., June 23, 2009. Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 20.

³ U.S., Congress, House, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs Committee on Oversight and Government Reform United States House of Representatives. March 3, 2010. “*Transnational Drug Enterprises (Part II): Threat to Global Stability and U.S. Policy Responses*”. <http://www.justice.gov/ola/testimony/111-2/03-03-10-placido-transnatl-drug-enterprises-part2.pdf> (accessed March 15, 2012).

Washington, D.C. in October 2010, U.S. Ambassadors to countries in West Africa identified drug trafficking as the “thread that could unravel West Africa.”⁴

Terrorists and transnational drug traffickers (TTDT) are coming together in a marriage of convenience to achieve their respective goals. This linkage represents a transnational problem and a threat that must be addressed before terrorists, sustained by illicit drug profits, become a more serious threat to the regional stability and United States’ interests at home and abroad.

The threat is being sustained in West Africa where a number of failed or failing states exist. In this region a number of countries lack effective government institutions to protect their citizenry or control their own territory by exercising the rule of law through police, prisons, and a judiciary system. In 2002, the National Security Strategy addressed the concern of the threat from failed states. In the words of President George W. Bush, the United States is “threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones.” In the Foreign Policy Annual Failed States Index for 2011, African countries represent 14 out of the top 20 positions for failed states and five are located in West Africa: Ivory Coast, Guinea, Nigeria, Niger, and Guinea-Bissau.⁵

Terrorists and transnational drug traffickers have found the states of West Africa, with their porous borders and corrupt and undermanned security forces, to be perfect transshipment points for their products. The permissive environment presents ideal conditions for drug cartels and terrorist groups to cooperate and operate in relative

⁴ Liana Wyler and Nicholas Cook, *Illegal Drug Trade in Africa Trends and U.S. Policy*: (Congressional Research Service, September 30, 2009 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office 2009).

⁵ “The Failed States Index for 2011” *Foreign Policy*, June 21, 2011 http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/06/17/2011_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_ranking (accessed March 15, 2012).

security. An analysis of the strategic environment and drug trafficking routes suggest the old problem of West Africa as a minor participant in illicit drug trafficking with a minimal impact on regional stability must be reassessed because of the increase in the amount of drugs transversing the region and the linkage between TTDT.

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement under the Department of State serves as the lead for the U.S. strategic approach to combating drug trafficking in West Africa; however, the emerging threat West Africa is the linkage between terrorists and transnational drug traffickers. This is a significant security threat that falls under the purview of United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM), therefore, it should take the lead to create unity of effort. The command under the Unified Common Plan (UCP) is responsible for the continent of Africa with the exception of Egypt while the DOS divides the continent under two bureaus: the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs and the Bureau of African Affairs. USAFRICOM possesses the resources and capabilities to assist regional organizations and West African nations as part of security assistance within the theater campaign plan to solve their own security challenges. Moreover, the command has a supporting plan for the Department of Defense combating terrorism campaign plan. USAFRICOM and United States Special Operations Command Africa (USSOCAFRICA) are responsible for defeating, dismantling, and disrupting terrorists that threaten both West African nations and the United States' national interests.

To understand the problem of illegal drug trade and its links to terrorism in West Africa, it is essential to comprehend West Africa's strategic environment in terms of its geography and history. The growing connection between TTDT continues to expand

across geographic boundaries assisted by domestic West African criminal syndicates. These syndicates cooperate in illicit smuggling operations and aid operatives of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, Hezbollah, and Boko Haram. The region is unique with many preexisting conditions conducive to illegal drug trade and terrorism. Terrorist groups and drug cartels operating in the area share similar-organizational structures, modes of operations, and tangible resources.

A comprehensive strategy requires both the interdiction of drugs and the dismantling of terror networks. The USARFICOM should be given the responsibility and authority for integrating diplomacy, development, and defense to leverage the core competencies of the military to develop a comprehensive approach to mitigate the threat to U.S. interests in West Africa.

The efforts of the U.S. Government have been largely ineffective in preventing collaboration and cooperation between terrorist and drug traffickers. A comprehensive approach led by USAFRICOM optimizes the role of each agency in combating the illicit drug trade and securing U.S. interests at home and abroad. This thesis proposes that USAFRICOM establish a comprehensive strategy in West Africa to combat the combined threat of terrorists and transnational drug traffickers.

CHAPTER 1

UNITED STATES' INTERESTS IN WEST AFRICA

The tandem of terrorists and the transnational drug traffickers affects the United States' humanitarian, security, and economic interests in West Africa to include long-term access to energy in the region. The Gulf of Guinea Region, an area of 500,000 square miles, is a major source of crude oil for the United States and its allies. It is a prime area for off shore oil development and commercial shipping. As the region continues to develop its energy resources, securing the maritime domain has become an important interest of the United States. Additionally, the area is located along immigration, trade, and transit routes of significant importance to global commerce and security. These routes facilitate the movement of illicit drugs from South America to West Africa and into Europe and even onward to the United States.

While new oil development throughout West Africa has the potential to create economic prosperity and improve stability in the region, realizing this potential requires addressing impediments to the region's development of oil reserves. These impediments, primarily inadequate border and maritime security, provide space for drug cartels and terrorist to operate or find safe haven.

During the Cold War, U.S. foreign policy emphasized foreign aid to develop countries on the African continent to prevent Communist control of West Africa. American policy makers and military planners largely defined the region by this Cold

War logic from the late 1950s until the late 1980s.¹ After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, many Americans considered the United States military's role in Africa to be minimal. In the early 1990s, political and humanitarian interests guided U.S. engagement. U.S. military deployed forces to Somalia to conduct humanitarian relief.

In 1993, the post-Cold War U.S. policy in Africa began to surface in a speech by Secretary of State Warren Christopher to the Africa-America Institute. Unlike Cold War practices, when U.S. "policies toward Africa were determined, not by how they affected Africa, but whether [they] brought advantage or disadvantage to Washington or Moscow."² Christopher announced that American relations with African states would now be "based upon our common interests and shared values."³ The new U.S. policy would focus on helping African states build their capacity to prevent and resolve conflict. Even as American policy evolved toward more involvement with Africa, the Department of Defense still maintained a limited engagement in the region. West Africa was not a top priority for the United States. As a 1995 report by the Department of Defense noted, "America's security interests are very limited."⁴

The United States National Security Strategy (NSS) in 1998 listed Africa as last among the world's regions requiring military assistance of any kind.⁵ The NSS advocated working with African states to address decades of social and economic problems, rather

¹ Peter J. Schraeder, *United States Foreign Policy toward Africa: Incrementalism, Crisis and Change* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

² Warren Christopher, "Promises 'New Relationship' with Africa," *Foreign Policy Bulletin*, 4 (July/August 1993), 29-31.

³ Ibid.

⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, *United States Security Strategy for Sub-Saharan Africa*, Washington, DC: Department of Defense, Office of International Security Affairs, August 1995, 3.

⁵ William Clinton, *A National Security Strategy for a New Century* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, October 1998), 54-57.

than establishing a secure environment to assist in attaining regional stability. However, following terrorist attacks on two United States embassies in East Africa in 1998, the U.S. military conducted a retaliatory attack against a pharmaceutical factory in Sudan that was at the time believed to be linked to al Qaeda. Many analysts considered the embassy bombings and the retaliatory strike a turning point in the United States strategic policy toward Africa.

The changes in the strategic environment shifted American foreign policy in Africa to preventing future terrorist attacks against the United States and its interests in the region. Military and intelligence experts viewed Africa as potential breeding grounds for Islamic extremism. After 9/11, the United States strategy to combat terrorism in Africa became much more pronounced. These new threats to oil supply required new U.S. policy approaches to energy security. U.S. energy policy now endorses stronger global alliances, such as bilateral relationships with key countries and regions.⁶

In 2002, the Bush Administration outlined a more focused strategic approach toward Africa in its National Security Strategy: In Africa, promise and opportunity sit side by side with disease, war, and desperate poverty. This threatens both a core value of the United States of preserving human dignity and U.S. strategic priority of combating global terror.⁷ The NSS focused on bilateral engagement to build indigenous security and intelligence capacity.

For the first time since 1993, the U.S. military deployed a sizeable force of American troops on the continent to conduct counter-terrorism operations, with the

⁶ Richard Cheney, "African Oil: A Priority for U.S. National Security and African Development," (Washington, DC: National Energy Policy Report, May 2001), 6.

⁷ George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, May 2002).

establishment of the Combined Joint Task Force–Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) in Djibouti in 2002 under the command of United States Central Command (USCENTCOM). The following year, President Bush announced \$100 million in funding for a counterterrorism initiative for the Horn and East Africa.

At the same time to counter terrorist threats in North Africa, the United States European Command (USEUCOM) began a series of training and military support operations in the Sahel.⁸ These activities were aimed at the Algeria-based terrorist organization Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) later renamed the al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). The program has evolved into the Trans-Sahara Counter terrorism Initiative (TSCTI) that involves both North African and Sahelian states.⁹ TSCTI is the strategy to address terrorist threats in the region and the program enhances regional cooperation to combat terrorism by increasing information sharing, promoting democracy, and reducing poverty.

By 2006, the National Security Strategy identified Africa as a high priority for the United States. The President declared that American security depends upon partnering with Africans. The United States must work to strengthen African's fragile and failing states, and assist their governments in bringing ungoverned areas under the control of effective democracies. The DOD planners and its DOS counterpart, who historically had not identified issues on the African continent as strategic priorities for the United States

⁸ Sahel means shore and is the transitional zone between the Sahara and the tropical savanna near Sudan. The Sahel region represents a dry transitional stage between the savannah and the Sahara to the north. The greater Sahel region stretches east to west across Africa from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea.

⁹ Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, southern Algeria, Niger, Nigeria, northern Cameroon, Sudan, and Eritrea.

military, now engage in a wide range of activities aimed at protecting trade interests, preventing and reducing armed conflict, and countering proliferation and terrorism.

By the 2010 NSS, President Obama raised Africa to a higher level of engagement. The document stated that the U.S. will expand the circle of nations, mainly in Africa because they are able to reap benefits of the global economy, while contributing to global security and prosperity.¹⁰ The United States intended to partner with African states as they grow their economies and strengthen their governance and democratic institutions. The Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime identified that drug trafficking organizations are one of the key drivers of a growing global security threat. President Obama described the challenge in this way:

Transnational criminal threats and illicit trafficking networks continue to expand dramatically in size, scope and influence posing significant national security challenges for the United States and our partner countries. This threats cross borders and continents and undermine the stability of nation, subverting government institutions through corruption and harming citizens worldwide. Transnational criminal organizations have accumulated unprecedented wealth and power through trafficking and other illicit activities, penetrating legitimate financial systems and destabilizing commercial markets. They extend their reach by forming alliances with government officials and some state security services.¹¹

The United States' concern with the threat is understandable. The continent is a combination of weak and failing states, religious and ethnic tension, its poverty, and its ungoverned spaces create conditions make Africa susceptible to terrorist activities and transnational drug trafficking. Some terrorist organizations pose a threat to U.S. interests,

¹⁰ Barack Obama, *National Security Security*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, May 2010).

¹¹ Barack Obama, *Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, July 2011).

and also specifically target African governments, for example, the radical Islamic Boko Haram in Nigeria, or AQIM in Algeria.

While the global war on terrorism often relates to international terrorists, Africans face significant security threats to their interests of equal or greater significance. This poses a question for American counterterrorism focus as well as African efforts. There are several organized crime syndicate, drug cartels, rebels, and insurgents on the continent. While they are not always classified as terrorists, they threaten national and regional stability and wreak havoc on Africa's people. These groups include various militias in Mali and Mauritania. Clearly, noting this broad scope, the United States and the international community cannot ignore the threat of terrorism emanating from Africa more so than threats from the Middle East or any other part of the world. Analysts considered drug trafficking and terrorist activities as separate phenomena prior to September 11, 2001; however, after the attacks on the United States analysts observed an increased in Latin American drug traffickers in West Africa.¹² Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) reported that since 2007, DEA has identified at least nine top-tier South American and Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTO) that have established operations in Africa.¹³

President Bush's decision to establish United States Africa Command or USAFRICOM in 2007 is a direct recognition of Africa's importance to American security interests. This command was established to serve as a different type of

¹² Annette Hübschl, "From Theory to Practice: Exploring the Organized Crime-Terror Nexus in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Perspective on Terrorism*, Vol 5, no. 3-4 (2011), 81
<http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/view/157/html> (accessed April 14, 2012).

¹³ U.S., Congress, Senate, *Confronting Drug Trafficking in West Africa*: Hearing Before the Subcommittee on African Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Relations, 111th Cong., 1st sess., 20.

command -- one emphasizing a whole of government approach. USAFRICOM is organized to work in concert with non-military government agencies and international partners. Although USAFRICOM is led by a four-star military general, it has an ambassador from the DOS serving as Deputy to the Commander for Civil-Military Activities. The command brings together diplomatic, information, military and economic experts from all branches of the military, as well as DOS, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and other agencies from the treasury, agriculture, and commerce departments. These nonmilitary staffs are funded with money from their own departments as well as the DOD. The command primary mission is conducting security engagement to promote stability and security on the African continent while deterring threats to the homeland.

One of the challenges face USAFRICOM in Africa particularly in West Africa, is the growing concern of terrorists and transnational drug traffickers working together. This threat poses a significant threat to the stability of the region and U.S. interests. The next chapter examines the strategic environment in West Africa in order to understand why this threat is emerging in the region.

CHAPTER 2

UNDERSTANDING WEST AFRICA

Africa's strategic importance is reflected historically in ways that have sometimes been less than a blessing for the continent. Comprehending both West Africa's strategic environment and its history is essential to understanding how the region attracts drug cartels and terrorist organizations. The West Africa region has drawn the attention of state and non-state actors because of its geography, natural resources and demographics.

West Africa Geography

West Africa is one of five sub-regions on the continent of Africa, and West Africa covers 2.9 million square miles an area more than twice the size of Western Europe. The region is bounded by the Sahel in the north and the Atlantic Ocean in the south and west. The northern border of West Africa along the Sahara Desert is a sparsely populated region due to the harsh environmental conditions that make traveling through the area hazardous and living there difficult.

There are three major rivers in the region that shape development: the Niger River (the longest at approximately 2,470 miles), the Senegal River and the Volta River (See Figure 1).



Figure 1

West Africa is comprised of 16 countries from Nigeria in the east, to Cape Verde in the west. The countries of Niger, Mali, and Mauritania are located below the Sahara Desert while the remaining countries are along the coast. The West African maritime domain encompasses the region's 5,273 miles long coastline making it vulnerable for clandestine landings. West Africa has over 200 ports, most of which serve local and regional maritime traffic with approximately only 30 facilities engaging in international trade. The four main ports are Lagos, Niger; Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire; Dakar, Senegal, and Douala, Cameroon.

The Sahel region and the pirate-ridden Gulf of Guinea are vast areas of ungoverned spaces. The Sahel is an area of formidable geography, a long history of smuggling, trafficking, banditry, and violence. There are at least three main routes across the area into northern Africa to Europe and south to the major ports of West Africa through which contraband and people flow. The area is rife with criminality, and it is a safe haven for al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. The U.S. has declared this area

battleground in the global war on terror. There is no question that terrorist threat is a serious problem in the region.

The Gulf of Guinea suffers from the maritime boundary disputes, piracy, illegal bunkering, disruption of oil terminals and flow stations operations, destruction of oil pipelines, poaching, terrorism, gun-running, and environmental degradation. Many of the West African's nations do not have navies or coast guard to protect their coast line. A lack of naval capacity has created several vulnerabilities in the maritime domain including port security and coast patrol that transnational drug traffickers and terrorists to exploit.

The majority of the cocaine and heroin enter West African via ungoverned spaces in the maritime and land domain. While some drugs enter the region by air, the majority of drugs are transported by sea and land rather than by air. Air transport is considered vulnerable, due to advances in long range detection devices and the high level of attention given to unidentified aircraft after 9/11.

Natural Resources

West Africa has an abundance of natural resources to include rare earth elements, arable land, and energy reserves. For example, Guinea has the world's largest bauxite deposits. Niger is among the top ten uranium producers. Ghana and Mali are major gold producing countries. Other natural resources that increase the West Africa's strategic importance include cocoa, coffee, oil palm, cobalt, copper, uranium, and columbite tantalite (a key raw material used in satellites, cellular phones, and other telecommunications equipment).

The region's possesses proven oil reserves found around the Gulf of Guinea that amount to over 58 billion barrels.¹ West Africa's vast oil reserves are equivalent to the entire stock of Western Europe, the Asia-Pacific region, and United States and Canada combined. According to U.S. Department of Energy Information Administration (EIA) the region has the third largest reserves in the world (See Figure 2).² These energy reserves have attracted both American and Chinese interests. EIA reported the U.S. imported 23 percent of its oil from Africa with West Africa accounting for 14 percent compared to 18 percent from the Middle East (See Figure 3).³

Reserves

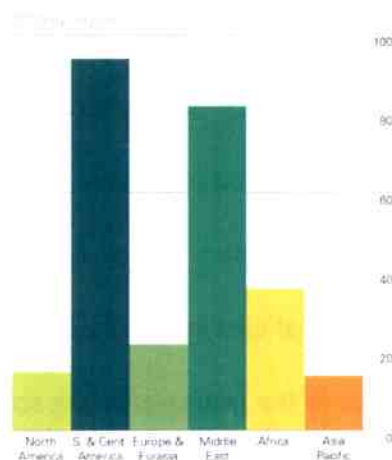
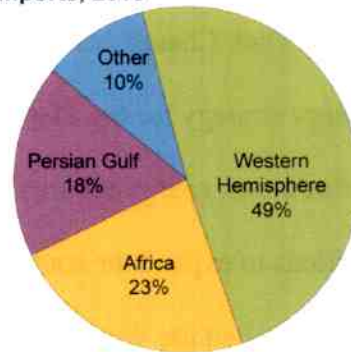


Figure 2

Sources of U.S. Net Petroleum Imports, 2010



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, *Petroleum Supply Monthly* (February 2011), preliminary data.

Figure 3

According to the *Economist*, West Africa is one of the fastest growing regions in the world, home to seven of the world's fastest growing economies, in possession of

¹ Sam Raphael and Doug Stokes, "Globalizing West African oil: U.S. 'Energy Security' and the Global Economy," *International Affairs* (2011), 87: 903–921. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2346.2011.01010. a definition of 'proven reserves' of oil, plus latest data, see the annual report from BP, *Statistical review of world energy*. Unless otherwise stated, oil production, consumption and export data in this section come from the June 2011 report, available at <http://www.bp.com/sectionbodycopy.do?categoryId=7500&contentId=7068481> (accessed February 23, 2012).

² U.S. Department of Energy Information Administration "Foreign Oil Dependence," http://www.eia.gov/energy_in_brief/foreign_oil_dependence.cfm. (accessed February 23, 2012)

³ Ibid.

approximately 13 percent of the world's oil supply and it has vast natural reserves including uranium and copper.⁴

President Clinton's 1998 United States National Security Strategy made it clear that a key U.S. priority in the region was "unhampered access to oil and other vital natural resources."⁵ Walter Kansteiner, former U.S. Undersecretary of State for African Affairs, noted that African oil has become a U.S. national strategic interest. Ed Royce, a Republican Congressman from California and former Chairman of the African Congressional Subcommittee, advised that after the tragic events of September 11, African oil should become a priority for U.S. national security.⁶

Under the Bush administration, this strategy gained significant momentum. Vice President Dick Cheney led a commission to examine U.S. energy security and to design an energy strategy for the 21st Century. One of the stated objectives was to strengthen America's own energy security by working cooperatively with key countries and institutions to expand the sources and types of global energy supplies.⁷ The U.S. energy policy identified the West African region as one of the fastest-growing sources of oil and gas for the American market. African oil tends to be of high quality and low in sulfur, and is therefore suitable for stringent refined product requirements for the East Coast of

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Clinton, 55.

⁶ Jean-Christophe Servant, "The New Gulf Oil States: Africa External Interest and Internal Insecurity," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, January 2003, <http://mondediplo.com/2003/01/08oil>, (accessed March 2, 2012).

⁷ U.S. National Energy Policy Development Group, *National Energy Policy*, May 2001, viii, 8-1–8-3, <http://www.ne.doe.gov/pdf/Files/nationalEnergyPolicy.pdf> (accessed March 2, 2011).

the United States refinement centers.⁸ The importance of this oil has influenced American strategy towards West Africa since the late 1990s.

Access to the region's oil continues as a developmental priority and serves as a key driver of U.S. energy policy under the Obama administration. In early 2009, the first budget submission request for foreign assistance in West Africa was framed by oil rich and strategically significant Gulf of Guinea as a rationale for urging increased attention⁹.

Although West African economies are growing, demographic changes and corruption have limited progress. West Africa possesses an abundant of natural resources; however, rather than contributing to regional economic prosperity and stability, the resources are sometimes viewed as a curse.¹⁰ Resource abundant West African economies have not had appreciable growth, but rather the reverse. The security and development of the region's energy sector remains the primary goal of U.S. policy. Claire Woodside asserts in "West Africa: America's Foreign Policy Post 911 and the 'Resource Curse,' A Head on Collision," "The United States has determined that unimpeded access to African oil is a national security interest of the United States."¹¹ As a result, the U.S. government has increased its military funding to combat terrorist threats in West Africa in order to protect oil reserves in the region.

The U.S. has expanded military aid programs in Africa, including the provision of arms, military equipment and technical assistance. Expanded aid programs are intended

⁸ Same Raphael and Doug Stokes, "Globalizing West African Oil: US 'Energy Security' and the Global Economy." *International Affairs*, 87, no. 4 (2011): 903-921.

⁹ U.S. Department of State, Congressional Budget Justification, Foreign Operations, fiscal year 2010 (Washington, DC, 2009), 136.

¹⁰ Claire Woodside, "West Africa: America's Foreign Policy Post 911 and the 'Resource Curse,' A Head on Collision," *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, 9, no. 4, (Summer 2007), 1.

¹¹ Ibid.

to enhance friendly African states' internal security so they can better control ethnic, religious, and factional divisions, support peacekeeping operations, and improve anti-terrorism measures.¹² Other measures that the U.S. is using to complement maritime security include military training, U.S. Navy exercises, the acquisition of basing rights in strategic African countries and the establishment of USAFRICOM as a new geographic combatant command responsible for the African region. USAFRICOM's role has been to maintain access to the maritime domain to enable freedom of access in the region.

Demographic Changes

According to data compiled from the United Nations (UN) 2011 World Population Database, West Africa is home to 317 million people. The region's population is slightly less than that of the United States' contiguous 48 states. Nigeria is home to 50 percent of the West African population with an estimated 155 million making it the most populous in Africa and the eighth largest in the world. If Nigeria continues to grow at its current rate, its population will reach 300 million by 2035, the same number as present-day United States, according to UN forecasts. This project growth is expected to place an enormous stress on Nigerian infrastructure and the governments' ability to meet the basic needs of its citizens.

Understanding demographic changes in the region is essential to explain the societal and policy changes therein. In West Africa, rapid population growth and the scarcity of readily usable resources, in particular declining sustenance levels, combine to produce a relatively low standard of daily living. Limited resources, in turn, leads to high unemployment, short life spans, and declining health. West African states are growing;

¹² Michael Klare and Daniel Volman, "America, China and the Scramble for Africa's Oil," *Review of African Political Economy* no. 108 (2006): 299.

however, demographic changes have limited the region's economic growth. The increased populations have required more essential services and infrastructure support.

West Africa is home to an increasing number of young men who are either underemployed or unemployed and who may prove vulnerable targets for those seeking to turn their resentment and despair toward violent and other illicit purposes.¹³ With 60 percent of the population under the age of 20, youth unemployment is increasingly a major source of concern.¹⁴ In 2005, the Secretary General of the United Nations stated in his report that youth unemployment is "the cause of destructive and self-destructive behavior, ranging from activity in neighborhood gangs to local militias membership where unemployed young people desperately seek not only income, but also recognition and a sense of identity."¹⁵ The estimated rate of unemployment among youth in West Africa is thought to be three times higher than among older adults, though no reliable figures exist partly since millions of youths are under-employed or compelled to work under poor conditions in the informal sector.¹⁶ This unemployment fuels not only conflict and crime, but cross-border drug trafficking and terrorist recruitment of young people.¹⁷

Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, and Cote d'Ivoire, where the number of young people without proper work exceeds 50 percent, demonstrate the close link between youth unemployment and sub-regional security.¹⁸ In Nigeria, the unemployment rate is

¹³ United Nations Office for West Africa, "Youth Unemployment and Regional Insecurity in West Africa," 2006, <http://www.un.org/unowa/unowa/studies/yunemp-v2-en.pdf>. (accessed March 12, 2012)

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

nearly 50 percent for people in urban areas ages 15 to 24, increasing crime and discontent. The large ranks of unemployed youths with little opportunity serve as a source for recruitment by the radical Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram. This group has been responsible for killing at least 550 people in 115 separate attacks in 2011 alone.¹⁹

Many of the West African governments lack legal systems, judicial structures, plans, funding, resources, and political will to combat terrorists and transnational drug traffickers.²⁰ In fact, all but three of the 16 West African countries are on the United Nations list of under developed countries, including the five countries (Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Niger, and Sierra Leone) with the lowest levels of human development in the world.²¹ According to data gathered by CIA *World Fact Book* and International Monetary Fund, West Africa is one of the poorest regions in the world. The World Bank reports the poverty rate of most West Africans range from 24 percent to 84 percent. Compared to the United States, this figure is extremely high. According to the 2011 U.S. Census Bureau, the United States national's poverty rate was 15 percent or approximately 46 million in 2010.²²

¹⁹ J. Peter Pham, "Boko Haram's Evolving Threat," Africa Center for Strategic Studies. (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 2012), 1.

²⁰ *Trafficking As a Security Threat in West Africa*. [Vienna, Austria]: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008. <<http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Drug%20Trafficking-West%20Africa-ENG-final.pdf>>. (access March 10, 2012).

²¹ United National Office of Drug Control Transnational Drug Assessment - Scribd. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/37466668/UNODC-TransnationalDrugAssessment> (accessed March 10, 2012).

²² U.S. Census Bureau. Income, Poverty and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2010. http://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/income_wealth/cb11-157.html (accessed April 17, 2012).

Summary

Unaddressed problems of poor governance, severe poverty, public corruption and growing insecurity resulting from the presence of terrorists and transnational drug traffickers (TTDT) threaten the development of natural resources and the reliable flow of oil from the region to the rest of the world. In 2009, the United Nations reported, the “combination of coups from the top and insurgencies from below render West Africa in the opinion of the UN the least politically stable region in the world.”²³

Because the maritime transportation system, like aviation is global, insecurity at these foreign ports can directly affect security across the international network. Weak security at the foreign ports can allow illegal drugs, contraband or weapons of mass destruction, to make their way via the network to the U.S.

Another challenge for maintaining security and curtailing drug trafficking in the region is the fact that it lies in relatively close proximity to South America. For example, Senegal is 1,127 kilometers closer to Brazil, than it is to France. West Africa is strategically positioned between nearby suppliers of cocaine in South America and heroin in Central Asia that make the region attractive for transporting drugs to European markets.

West Africa is affected by a combination of factors making it vulnerable to TTDT but most notably is the region’s ungoverned spaces, and its porous coastline and land borders. These geographical factors are exacerbated, however, by national institutions in the region that are often under-resourced, weak and fragile, as West African states strive

²³ Ted Leggett “Transnational Trafficking and the Rule of Law in West Africa: A Threat Assessment,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, (July 2009), 3. http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/West_Africa_Report_2009.pdf (accessed March 27, 2012).

to emerge from violent conflicts and long institutional crises. Thus, the TTDT find safe havens to operate.

It is important to understand that the drug traffickers and terrorists are not deterred by the harsh environment of West Africa (once the drugs have penetrated the maritime domain) due to their reliance on alliances with criminal syndicates. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) recognized the potential for transnational organized crime (TOC), particularly, drug trafficking, to undermine the stability of the region. On December 8, 2009, the Security Council focused on the issue of drug trafficking as a threat to international peace and security.²⁴ Burkina Faso's Foreign Minister Bedouma Alain Yoda, whose country held the Presidency of the Council that year, had stressed the "devastating impact" of drug trafficking in Africa.²⁵ Additionally, the UN Security Council has adopted a presidential statement that calls for greater action to combat drug trafficking as a threat to international security.

A declining U.S. cocaine market and a rising demand in Europe have prompted South American drug traffickers to shift their efforts towards the weak governance areas in West Africa as transit zones. West Africa suffers from decades of political instability since their independence. The legacies of colonialism continue to influence governance. Although the region is rich with natural resources, the majority of West African's states are poor and recovering from many prolonged civil wars. The following chapter explores these conditions to examine why drug traffickers are able to transit and move illegal drugs from West Africa into Europe and North America.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

SETTING THE CONDITIONS FOR DRUG TRAFFICKING

Illicit drugs moving from South America to markets in North America and Europe do not always follow the most direct route. Several factors other than geography enter into the equation. Weak governance has a gravity of its own. Although West African states are diverse, they have much in common. Not only their origins as colonial territories, but also the similar hazards and difficulties they have faced since their independence. The colonialism continues to influence West African's governments and to some extent have caused political instability. For a variety of reasons, Africa is home to many failed or failing states in terms of in terms of their capacity to secure their borders and enforce the rule of law in their territories. Many of the West African governments are under-resourced and subjected to wide spread corruption. In recent years, it has become clear that terrorists and transnational drug traffickers have exploited West Africa vulnerability.

Colonialism's Influence on Governance

The Berlin Conference in 1885 set in motion the process to divide the African continent among the European powers. As Europeans staked their claims, they implemented various policies to govern and develop the region for their purposes. They arbitrarily established borders south of the Sahara which, in many places, cut across homogenous ethnic groups and forced former warring tribes or enemies into unitary states. At this time, West Africa was divided into French and English speaking states. For example, there are eight countries where French is spoken today: Benin, Burkina

Faso, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea and Senegal. There are four English speaking British colonies (Nigeria, Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Gambia) along with Liberia. The people of Guinea-Bissau speak Portuguese.¹

West Africa's boundaries still reflect its colonial heritage and still have a far reaching effect on the continent because of its lasting influence on the political, social, economic and cultural life. West African's states, like most countries on the continent, have border disputes because of the arbitrary borders established after the Conference of Berlin which created artificial states. Colonial powers forced and inconsistent amalgamation of native states without regards of tribal, religious or ethnic considerations. Borders, which largely continued to exist long after independence, often split tribes, join incompatible ethnic groups, or created countries that struggled economically because they were too small, too big, or landlocked. Given this problem in which African borders were established, it is not surprising to see conflict as states struggle to redefine their national boundaries in this modern era. Therefore countries such as Nigeria, Senegal, Ghana, and Mali do not constitute nations with their specific culture, national identity, own separate language. In April 2012, Tuareg² rebels in the West African took over the city of Timbuktu in Mali, and they unilaterally declared their independence from Mali. They announced the birth of a new nation called Azawad, however, the declaration has been ignored or condemned by the international community and West African. Considering the arbitrary nature of many national borders in West Africa which date to

¹ Central Intelligence Agency, *World Fact Book* (2012)
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html> (accessed February 17, 2012)

² The Tuareg are a Berber people who inhabitants the Sahel parts of Algeria, Niger, and Mali. They are nomadic and often move across national borders across national borders, and small groups. They found in southwestern Libya and northern Burkina Faso, and northern Nigeria.

the colonial era, and the likelihood of protracted dispute in underdeveloped and poverty stricken area will continue to cause instability and challenge U.S. interests in the region.

West African's Governance After Independence

In the broadest sense, the West African security environment is shaped by the comparative weakness of the states which compose it.³ Personalities play a significant role in African governance, due to the weakness of political institutions. Since 2000, the region has seen eight coups, two attempted coups,⁴ three civil wars,⁵ and the assassination of one president.⁶ Although this political instability has affected governance in the region and caused disruption in U.S. diplomatic efforts, the recent peaceful and credible elections in Liberia and Nigeria are an encouraging sign of promoting democracy. At the same time, political crises resulting from contested electoral processes, unconstitutional changes of government or other threats to democratic processes and governance continue to preventing a number of West African countries progress towards good governance.⁷ Following the first democratic elections in 10 years, Cote d'Ivoire's President Gbagbo and opposition candidate, Ouattara, claimed victory in October 2010.⁸ International observers agreed that Ouattara had won, but Gbagbo refused to accept the results.⁹ The situation became volatile and violent outbursts led to the country's second civil war. The

³ Steve Metz, "Refining American Strategy in Africa," *The Strategic Studies Institute*, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdf/PUB199.pdf> (accessed May 28, 2012).

⁴ Mauritania has witnessed two coups and two coup attempts, Gambia and Côte d'Ivoire have both seen two coups, and Guinea-Bissau and Niger one each.

⁵ Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Cote d'Ivoire

⁶ President Viera of Guinea-Bissau was assassinated on March 2, 2009

⁷ Ibid., 2

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

political unrest represented a setback and a source of unacceptable risk for national and international stakeholders. In Niger a political and constitutional crisis continues to undermine the country's progress. In February 2010, a military coup in that country disrupted progress achieved in democratic governance and rule of law.

Weak governmental practices coupled with a weak infrastructure contribute to underdeveloped economies and corrupted security institutions. The political instability in West Africa has created conditions for drug traffickers to thrive where governments have weak security institutions. These states are often corrupt, suffer from internal conflict, and lack good governance. These conditions have created an environment for radicalization of West Africans. According to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), "Weaknesses in democratic governance and factors contributing to fragility inhibit social development and economic growth, can cause civil unrest and provide fertile ground for the rise of extremist ideologies."¹⁰ The threat is compounded when weak, failing, or failed states afford safe haven to terrorist groups.

Drug Trafficking Comes to West Africa

West Africans states' have been involved in the global illicit drug trade for several decades, but they played a generally peripheral role in large-scale illegal drug trade prior to the mid-2000s. During colonial times, the region experienced illegal trading in its natural resources,¹¹ and it also became an area of transit for the European

¹⁰ United States Agency for International Development, "Democracy and Governance in Africa," August 2005, http://usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/regions/afr/, (accessed December 3, 2008).

¹¹ Gail Wannenburg, "Organized crime in West Africa," *African Security Review*, no. 4, 2005:1-22

and American drug market.¹² Since independence, many West African states economies “became increasingly informal and progressively dominated by criminal networks.”¹³ In the early 1980s, West African drug trafficking was mostly limited to individuals carrying small amounts of drugs via commercial airlines to Europe. These individuals passed through European and North American airport security undetected as drugs smugglers. West Africans were not seen as major player in drugs smuggling into Europe or North America.¹⁴ While Americans and European law enforcement authorities focused their attention on Latin America drug cartels, transnational drug traffickers shifted their focus to West Africa. By the 1990’s drug expertise noticed an increased number of Nigerian citizens apprehended at airport for transporting illegal drugs. In 1991, approximately 60 percent of heroin found at JFK Airport in New York was “carried by Nigerians.”¹⁵ By 1998, Nigeria became known as “the hub of African narcotics trafficking.”¹⁶

In the late 1990s, West African cocaine seizures “were less than 100 kilograms.”¹⁷ The number of cocaine seizures has increased significantly in the past ten years. The United Nations Office of Drug Control (UNODC) recorded a trend signaling a significant increase in cocaine seizures in West African countries en route to Europe. The UNODC documented its finding in its 2005 World Drug Report (WDR).¹⁸ During this period, law enforcement agencies discovered that several Latin American drug trafficking

¹² Stephen Ellis, “West Africa’s International Drug Trade,” *African Affairs: the Journal of the Royal African Society*, 2009, 108, no. 431: 171-196.

¹³ Wannenburg, 4.

¹⁴ Ellis, 196.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ World Drug Report, ed. Available at: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2005.html> (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2005). (accessed March 6, 2012)

organizations (DTOs) were using West Africa as a transit hub to transport cocaine to its European market. Drug trafficking reached an alarming level in 2006. The UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa characterized the region as “under attack” by these DTOs. He described the threat facing West Africa as a severe and complex drug problem with acquired evidence detailing two streams of illicit drugs: heroin into Eastern Africa and cocaine into West Africa.¹⁹

Between 2001 and 2006, annual cocaine seizures in the region increased from approximately 273 kilograms to 15,000 kilograms. Most of these seizures were made in Nigeria, reflecting that country’s enhancement of its law enforcement and interdiction capabilities.²⁰ Between 2005 and 2007, 33 metric tons of cocaine were seized from West Africa en route to Europe. By 2008, the UNODC reported 35 percent of cocaine shipped to Europe from Latin America transited West Africa.²¹ Although recent reporting indicated a decrease in number and volume of cocaine seizures from its peak of “nearly 6,500 kilograms” in 2009,²² a decrease in the rate does not mean that the illicit drug trade has declined (See Figure 4). It merely indicates cartels and smugglers have adapted and become more sophisticated in their means and methods to transport cocaine.²³

¹⁹ United Nation. Security Council debates “devastating impact” of drug trafficking, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2009/December/security-council-debates-devastating-impact-of-drug-trafficking.html> (accessed April 17, 2012).

²⁰ World Drug Report, ed. Available at: <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/WDR-2006.html> (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2006) (accessed March 6, 2012).

²¹ World Drug Report, ed. Available at http://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2008/WDR_2008_eng_web.pdf (Vienna: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008) (accessed March 6, 2012).

²² Ibid.

²³ West Africa drugs trafficking “increasingly sophisticated,” BBC News, June 21, 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk> (accessed March 29, 2012).

Drug Seizures

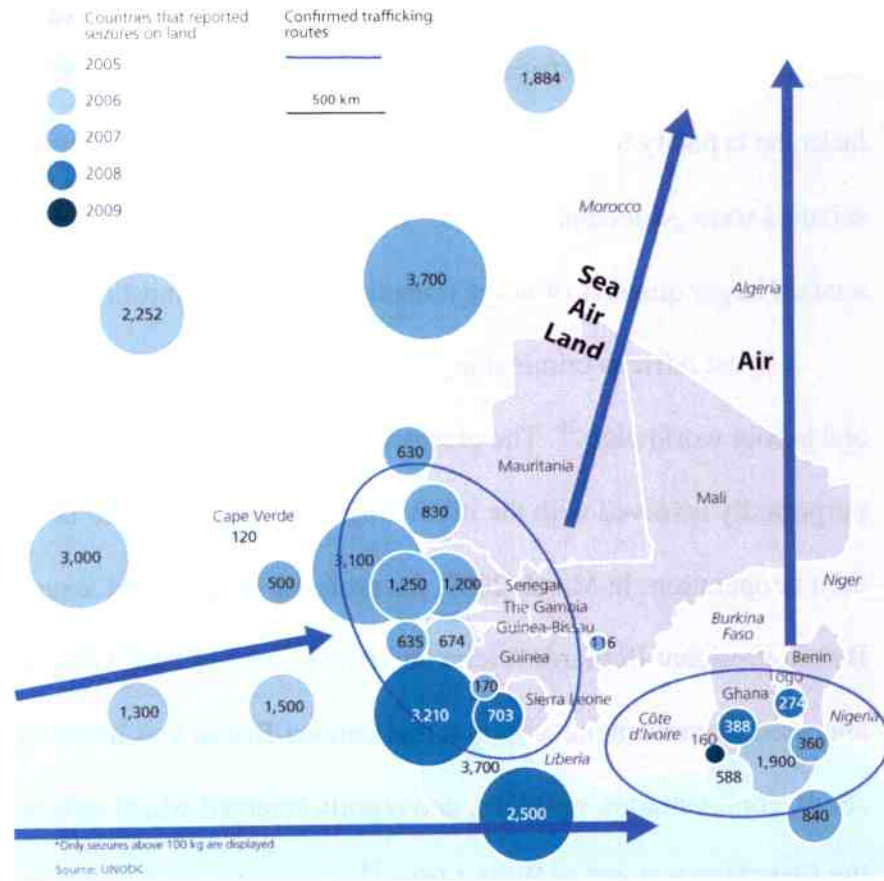


Figure 4

The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported that there has been a repositioning of trade routes and change in mode of transportation to submarines, mother ships, fast-boats, and smaller planes, but less sophisticated means are now being used by Latin American cartels to transport illicit drugs to West Africa and beyond.²⁴ Moreover, according to 2009 UN statistics approximately one third of the cocaine

²⁴Tristan McConnell, "West Africa newest market in global drug trade," *Globalpost*, June 24, 2011, <http://www.globalpost.com> (accessed March 29, 2012).

destined for Europe via West Africa is used in the domestic African market.²⁵ This data denotes a disturbing trend and confirms the concerns raised by the international community that West Africa is the newest transit hub for cocaine. Most of West Africa lacks the capacity to interdict both maritime and land smuggling. Many of the recorded seizures were accidental or partial. This would seem to indicate the possible existence of a much larger quantity of drugs transiting the region, most of which were never seized.

West African criminal organizations are a key factor in moving illegal cocaine and heroin worldwide.²⁶ The president and top military leaders of Guinea-Bissau were purportedly involved with the illicit drug trade and were paid large sums of money by their cooperation. In March 2009, the probable drug-related assassinations of Guinea-Bissau President Bernardo Vieira and Army Chief of Staff General Tagme Na Waie appeared to confirm the assertion that Guinea-Bissau was indeed a “Narco-State.”²⁷ As a result, commentaries, opinions, and reports emerged which referred to Guinea-Bissau as the first “Narco-state” in West Africa.²⁸

²⁵ Kofi Annan, “Save West Africa from the drugs barons,” *The Observer*, January 29, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk> (accessed March 3, 2012).

²⁶ CBS, “Nigerian comedian’s drug arrest becomes joke” CBS News Web site, http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-202_162-20128780/nigerian-comedians-drug-arrest-beco-mes-joke/ (accessed March 10, 2012).

²⁷ Assimo Balde and Rukmini Callimachi, “Twin Assassinations Leave Guinea-Bissau in Turmoil,” *Associated Press*, March 2, 2009; Brent Latham, “Bissau Assassinations Highlight Obstacles to Drug Trafficking Fight,” *VOA News*, March 3, 2009; Tristan McConnell, “President Joao Bernardo Vieira of Guinea-Bissau Assassinated by Army,” *Timesonline*, March 3, 2009; “Murdered Guinea-Bissau General Found 200 Kilos of Cocaine,” *Agence France Presse*, March 5, 2009; Todd Pitman, “Guinea-Bissau Collapse Deepens after Leader Killed,” *ABC News International*, 5 March 2009.

²⁸ Jónína Einarisdóttir, “Partnership and Post-War Guinea-Bissau,” *African Journal of International Affairs* 10, no. 1&2 (2007); Caroline Sourt, “Africa’s First Narco-State?,” *The Guardian*, March 9, 2009, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/mar/06/guinea-bissau-drugs-trade> (accessed March 20, 2012); Ed Vulliamy, “How a Tiny West African Country Became the World’s First Narco State,” *The Guardian Observer*, March 9, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/mar/09/drugstrade>, (accessed March 20, 2012).

The 2010 UNODC report on “The Globalization of Crime” considers West Africa a region under stress where transnational cocaine trafficking has become a serious challenge to governance and stability.²⁹ The region’s governments simply do not have the strength to fight an enemy as formidable as transnational drug traffickers. According to the United Nations (UN), over a quarter of Europe’s cocaine is illicitly trading via Africa.³⁰

In recent years, West Africa has seen the largest increase in illegal drug trafficking of anywhere else in the world. One reason for the increased trafficking of cocaine from Latin America countries to West Africa is the result of successful interdiction efforts by the U.S. and its partners in the Western Hemisphere. Avoiding the increased risk of entry through the U.S., drug traffickers are transporting cocaine from Colombia to Venezuela and shipping it to West Africa for onward shipment to the European market. West Africa is located approximately 4,000 miles away, across the Atlantic, from the cocoa fields of South America making the region an ideal location. It is also a good transit site for heroin produced in Afghanistan for onward movement to United States and Europe (See Figure 5).³¹

²⁹ Regional Programme Framework - United Nations Office on Drug Control, UNODC, The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment (2010), www.wds.worldbank.org/http://www.wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSPContentServer/WDSP/IB/1995/12/01/000009265_3961214153039/Rendered/INDEX/multi_page.txt<http://www.unodc.org/westandcen/trafrica/en/regional-programme-framework.html> (accessed March 10, 2012).

³⁰ Graham Keeley and Paul Lewis, “The West African connection: drug barons find new route on to the streets of Britain,” *The Guardian*, August 27, 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk> (accessed March 21, 2012).

³¹ Central Intelligence Agency

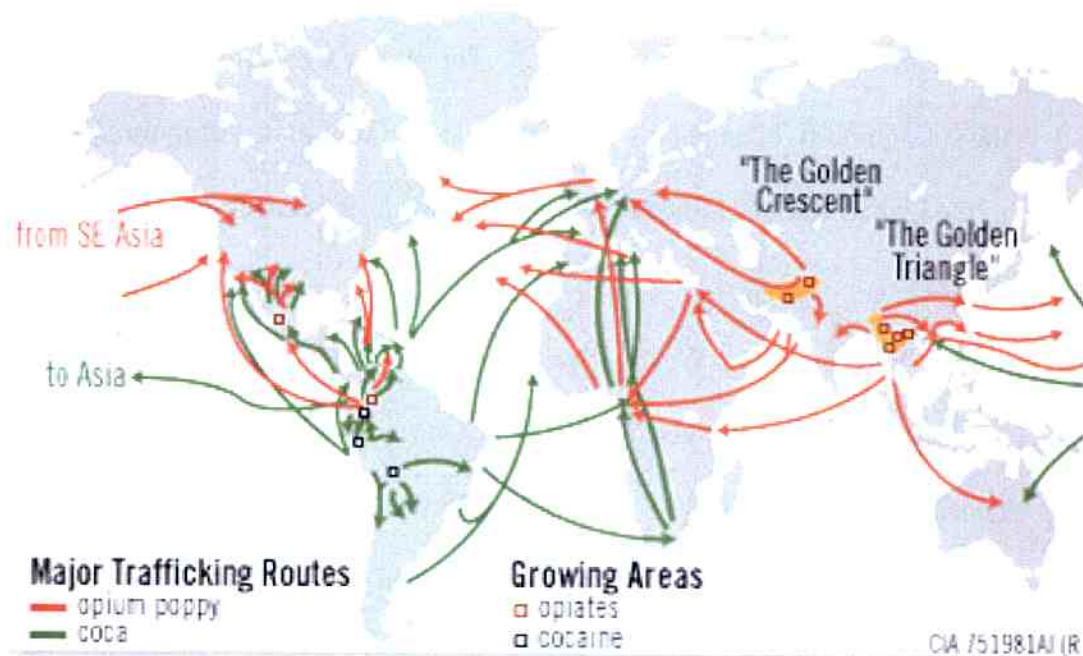


Figure 5

Most cocaine entering West Africa from South America makes landfall in Ghana in the south and Guinea-Bissau in the north. The cocaine is then transported between West African and North African countries before being shipped via commercial air flights or trucked across land. Terrorist and transnational drug traffickers have created new trafficking routes across Chad, Niger, and Mali. Costa warned that, like in the South American and West Asian countries, terrorists and anti-government forces extract resources from drug trafficking in the region.³²

Latin American DTOs shifted their cocaine market away from North America because of a declining U.S. cocaine market coupled with a rising European market. Cocaine traffickers can generate more revenue in Europe than in America because of the unfavorable exchange rate of dollars against Euros and pounds. European authorities

³² Ibid.

report that two pounds of uncut cocaine has a street value of \$45,000 in Europe versus \$22,000 in U.S.³³

Maritime security improvements both on the American side of the Atlantic and along European coastal waters have deterred traffickers from moving their product directly to U.S. or European markets using sea-going vessels.³⁴ Moreover, the cooperation between the United States and Mexico under the Merida Initiative has interdicted the flow of narcotics entering the U.S. south of its border. As a result, DTOs have redirected their operations to West Africa, whose proximity to both the source and destination makes it an ideal headquarters site.³⁵

The drug trafficking routes used in West and North Africa are the same ancient routes used to transport salt.³⁶ According to Michael Braun, former chief of operations at the Drug Enforcement Administration, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) uses these routes to transport cocaine from Africa to Europe.³⁷ The Sahel linking West and North Africa serves as the main land hub for this trafficking.³⁸ The cocaine arriving from Latin America is transported to West Africa, particularly Guinea-Bissau, a major hub in

³³ Joseph Kirshke, "The Coke Coast: Cocaine and Failed States in Africa," *World Politics Review*, September 9, 2008 <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/2629/the-coke-coast-cocaine-and-failed-states-in-africa>, (accessed March 11, 2012).

³⁴ Colleen Cook, *Mexico's Drug Cartels* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2007), 20.

³⁵ Arthur Brice, "Latin American Drug Cartels Find Home in West Africa," *CNN.com*, 21 September 21, 2009, http://articles.cnn.com/2009-09-21/world/africa.drug.cartels_1_drug-cartels-european-market-cocaine?_s=PM:WORLD (accessed March 11, 2012).

³⁶ Analysts: North Africa Qaeda Helps drug Trade," *Middle-East-Online.com*, June 15, 2010. Available at <http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=39555> (accessed March 11, 2012).

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Dario Christiani, "Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and the Africa-to-Europe Narco Trade Connection" *Terrorism Monitor* November 24, 2010. http://www.janestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews percent5Btt_news percent5D+37207&tx_ttnews percent5BbackPid percent5D=13&cHash=b9fb8c5a5e (accessed March 11, 2012).

the region, Mali, Mauritania, or Gambia. These states have weak policing and sufficient landing and docking sites which security services are unable to control, especially along maritime borders.³⁹ These conditions make for a low-cost and low-risk environment for both drug traffickers and terrorist groups to operate. African expert Peter Pham asserts, “While a very small number of people will actually get richer, the vast majority of the population is rendered even poorer, increasing existing inequalities and, ultimately, heightening social tensions.”⁴⁰

Summary

The widespread under employment and unemployment, persistent conflict, poor border security, widespread corruption and weak governmental institutions contribute significantly to the continuation and expansion of drug trafficking in West Africa. Many countries are both ill-equipped and untrained to prevent traffickers from using their states and other countries do not have the will to stop them. The region’s geographical proximity to South America and access to global narcotics markets provides both an incentive and mechanism for DTOs to flourish.⁴¹

In the vulnerable developing West African states, drug trafficking brings quick, albeit corrupt, money to fragile economies. This source of funding stifles long-term investment in development. In addition to the corruption, which itself discourages the type of direct foreign investment developing countries need to grow their economies, the drug trade also undermines development by making illegal short-term monetary gains.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Wilson Center, *Global Drug Trafficking: Africa's Expanding Role* | <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/global-drug-trafficking-africas-expanding-role> (accessed April 14, 2012).

⁴¹ U.S. Department of State, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, Washington, D.C.: May 2011. <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2011/vol1/156362.htm> (accessed March 10, 2012).

much more attractive than longer term legal investments. Laundered money from the drug trade creates a false sense of prosperity, as the money is not used to develop a country's economy and infrastructure. According to Victor Showers, "insecurity stemming from the drug trade negatively affects foreign investment, leading to the exacerbation of economic constraints, and then to political destabilization."⁴² The illegal drug trade's other negative outcomes include an increase in violent crime, arms trafficking, and the ability for terrorist groups to fund themselves.

The insecurity stemming from decades of political instability and under-developed natural resources have created ideal conditions for Latin America to exploit. While the United States has focused its attention on combating terrorism in North Africa and East Africa, terrorists have found safe havens in West Africa. Terrorists and transnational drug traffickers have found common ground and are working together in a marriage of convenience. The next chapter examines this nexus and some of the key actors operating in the region.

⁴² Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

THE RISE OF NARCO-TERRORISTS

Since the 1980s researchers and scholars have often used the term narco-terrorism to describe the connection between drug traffickers and terrorists. In the early 1980's, Latin American drug cartels used acts of violence to attack and intimidate political officials and police to influence politics and obstruct justice.¹ In 1983, Peruvian President Terry Belaunde introduced the term "narco-terrorism" to define those acts of violence against Peruvian anti-narcotic police.² Following the attacks on September 11, 2001, the media, government officials, and the academic community devoted much attention to the topic of narco-terrorism. More recently, the term refers to terrorist groups, who use the drug trafficking to finance their operations.

Criminologist Rachel Ehrenfeld defines narco-terrorism as "the use of drug trafficking to advance the objectives of governments and terrorist organizations."³ Currently, there are several definitions in use; for example, the United States Department of Defense defines the term as:

...terrorism conducted to further the aims of drug traffickers. It may include assassinations, extortion, hijacking, bombing, and kidnappings directed against judges, prosecutors, elected officials, or law enforcement agents, and general disruption of a legitimate government to divert attention from drug operations.

¹ Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, "Narco-Terrorism in Afghanistan", *Terrorism Monitor*, Vol. 2, Issue 6, Jamestown Foundation, May 24, 2004, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=26379, (accessed March 25, 2012)

² Ibid.

³ Rachel Ehrenfeld, *Narco-Terrorism* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), xiii.

Asa Hutchinson, former administrator of the U.S. Drug Enforcement, in his testimony before the U.S. Judiciary Committee defined narco-terrorism:

...as a subset of terrorism, in which, terrorist groups or associated individuals, participate directly or indirectly in the cultivation, manufacture, transportation, or distribution of controlled substances and the monies derived from these activities...narco-terrorism may be characterized by the participation of groups or individuals in taxing, providing security for, or otherwise aiding or abetting drug trafficking endeavors in an effort to further, or fund, terrorist activities.⁴

Recent research into narco-terrorism identified a linkage between terrorist groups and drug traffickers by their involvement in any aspect of the illicit drug trade. While the connection between drug traffickers and terrorist groups has been well documented in Western Hemisphere countries such as Columbia, Peru, Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay, much less has been researched on the operational dynamics and organization of the drug trade in West Africa. However, analysts have documented the growing nexus between the transnational drug traffickers and terrorists. The United States Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) reports that of the 43 officially recognized terrorist organizations, 19 of them are linked to some aspect of the illicit global drug trade.⁵ Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) is one of those organizations.

Some analysts are reluctant to do anything more than speculate on al Qaeda's involvement in organized crime, employing the caveat that the organization was founded on strong ideological principles inherently different from criminal organizations. Antonio Maria Costa asserts that "as Latin American cocaine smugglers seek to exploit emerging

⁴ U.S. Congress, Senate, Statement of Asa Hutchinson Administrator, Drug Enforcement Administration Hearing on March 13, 2002, Before the Senate Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Technology, Terrorism, and Government Information, United States Senate, 107th Cong., 1st sess.

⁵ Ibid.

markets in Europe, they are collaborating with al Qaeda affiliates in the region. Costa warned that, what occurred in South American and West Asian countries, where terrorists and anti-government extract resources from the drug trafficking in the region, could occur in West Africa. According to the DEA criminal and terrorist organizations, including Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) assisted by AQIM are using West Africa to access their European market.⁶ The cooperation between these groups is certainly not in U.S. national interest to the FARC enriched through illicit activities in West Africa.

The nexus between terrorists and transnational drug traffickers (TDDT) does not end with illegal drug trafficking. Their partnerships are complex, linking illegal drugs, money, geography, and politics. TDDT have found common ground to cooperate to achieve their goals. Drug trafficking in West Africa provides financing to dangerous terrorist organizations, such as AQIM. As just one example, in 2010, Mauritanian authorities reported that members of AQIM were providing security for a convoy of cocaine and marijuana⁷. The United States must do everything it can to ensure that AQIM and other extremist groups are not further strengthened by the drug trade. This emerging threat is a security challenges that falls under the responsibility of USAFRICOM.

Drug traffickers seek to expand their market to increase profits while terrorist groups seek a means to fund their campaign of terror. Terrorists and drug traffickers have long borrowed tactics and techniques and shared similar characteristics that are

⁶ U.S. Senate Caucus on International Narcotics Control, <http://drugcaucus.senate.gov/r-west-africa-hearing-statement-5-16-12.html> (accessed April 25, 2012).

⁷ John Rollins and Liana Wyler, *International Terrorism and Transnational Crime: Security Threat, U.S. Policy, and Considerations for Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service), 2010.

commonly ascribed to the other. The groups may converge, drift, evolve, transform, or otherwise change their ideological motivations and organizational structure to appear to resemble each other. In general, there appears to be at least three primary ways in which crime and terrorism may overlap: (1) through shared tactics and methods, (2) through the process of transformation from one type of group to the other over time, and (3) through short-term or long-term transaction-based service-for-hire activities between groups.⁸

While drug traffickers and terrorists cooperate at some level in West Africa, they have different views of the conditions. Drug traffickers want stable governments in the region over which they can establish control. They obviously prefer a political climate which they can operate freely without government interference. Conversely, terrorist organizations seek to exploit the weak institutions to create a climate of instability in which they can find safe havens in ungoverned spaces to plan, train, refit, and recover.

Key Actors

West Africa has a broad range of terrorist organizations, militant groups, and criminal syndicates involved in illicit activities and smuggling especially in the Sahara and Sahel regions. Latin American drug cartels and terrorist organizations are carrying out drug trafficking in West Africa to move cocaine northward into Europe. West African drug traffickers are often allied with and cooperate with the FARC, AQIM, Hezbollah and Boko Haram. Some terrorists and transnational drug traffickers, such as the FARC, have been linked to cocaine trafficking into Venezuela, where much of the cocaine now transiting West Africa is believed to be exported.⁹

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Mark Sullivan, *Venezuela: Political Conditions and U.S. Policy*; Washington, D.C.: (Congressional Research Service), 2009.

Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

AQIM is designated as a foreign terrorist organization by the United States Department of State. The organization originated as an armed Islamic movement against the secular government of Algeria in the 1990s. It was formerly known as the Salafi Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC) and operated mainly in North Africa and the Sahel. AQIM's stated objective is to overthrow the government of Algeria. It follows al Qaeda's broader level strategy of attacks on the West. In 2006, the group allied itself with al Qaeda and changed its name to al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Since then, AQIM has expanded its reach southward into ungoverned territories in Niger, Mauritania, and Mali. Analysts' assessments noted that AQIM has personnel or facilitators or at least smuggling contacts as far west as Senegal, Guinea, and Guinea-Bissau.¹⁰ It has exploited the weak government control over parts of the Sahel, developing local alliances and working with local officials.

As AQIM has expanded its operations in West Africa, it has demonstrated a willingness to cooperate with drug traffickers. While Latin America and Mexico drug traffickers seek to feed a growing demand for cocaine in Europe, AQIM seeks to procure funding to operate. AQIM's cooperation with drug traffickers gives the terrorists access to complex and clandestine operations used to smuggle cocaine into the United States. Understanding how transnational drug traffickers are able to transport cocaine and enter into the U.S. provides an opportunity for al Qaeda and its affiliates to carry out terrorist attacks similar to the 2004 Madrid bombing of a commuter train. The Council on Foreign Relations suggests links existed between AQIM and a Moroccan cell responsible

¹⁰ Andre Le Sage, "The Evolving Threat of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb," Strategic Forum: Institute for National Strategic Studies, July 2011, <http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/pdi/SirForum/SF-268.pdf> (accessed April 22, 2012).

for the 2004 Madrid bombings. It was later discovered that the Madrid bombers financed their operation almost entirely through the sale of narcotics.

In 2009 AQIM was again linked to FARC and drug trafficking when its members were arrested while working with the FARC to move cocaine through West Africa. In December 2009 after being arrested in Ghana, Oumar Issa, Harouna Toure, and Idriss Abelrahman were extradited to New York to stand trial for their involvement in drug trafficking. The three men of Mali origin were members of AQIM, and were protecting shipments of cocaine for FARC in return for a portion of the profits. The cocaine, which originated in Colombia, had been trafficked through West and North Africa en route to the lucrative Western European market. As these cases exemplify, drug trafficking often serves as a bonding agent between very different actors. West Africans affiliated with an Islamic terrorist organization based in the Middle East were cooperating with Latin America drug traffickers to move cocaine from Latin America through Africa, and onto the market in Western Europe.

In the previous five years, AQIM's primary source of funding have come kidnapping for ransom but recently it has come to rely more on drug traffickers. This gives AQIM the ability to increase its operating budget to facilitate recruitment, to purchase weapons, and to carry out increasingly more sophisticated attacks across the region. Drug funding has dramatically increased the overall operational capacity of the terrorist group to attack targets of interests.

Hezbollah

Hezbollah literally means the “Party of God.” It is a powerful military and political organization based in Lebanon and made up mainly of Shia Muslims.¹¹

Hezbollah is a surrogate of Iran but receives financial and political support from both Iran and Syria. It emerged with financial backing from Iran in the early 1980s and began a struggle to drive Israeli troops from Lebanon. One of Hezbollah’s primary goals is the elimination of the State of Israel. Hezbollah’s paramilitary wing is regarded as merely a resistance movement throughout much of the Arab and Muslim worlds.¹² However, the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Australia, and Israel classify Hezbollah as a terrorist organization.¹³

The international community, particularly Israel, has expressed concern regarding Hezbollah involvement in West Africa. In February 2012, Israel’s envoy to the U.N. told the U.N. Security Council that Western Africa has become Hezbollah’s “powerbase,” while urging the council to act swiftly.¹⁴ Ron Prosor, Ambassador of Israel to the United Nations, mentioned “Israel is particularly concerned over Hezbollah’s use of the area [West Africa] as a base of terror operations. Criminal activities in West Africa coincidentally bolster Hezbollah’s efforts to create sleeper-cells in the area.”¹⁵ Several

¹¹ “Hezbollah (a.k.a. Hizbollah, Hizbu’llah),” *Council on Foreign Relations*, September 13, 2008, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9155/hezbollah.html?breaderumb=%2F>, (accessed April 18, 2012)

¹² Dahr Jamail, “Hezbollah’s transformation,” *Asia Times*, July 20, 2006, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Middle_East/HG20Ak02.html, (accessed April 18, 2012)

¹³ Renata Goldirova, “MEPs call on EU states to list Hezbollah as terrorist group,” September 17, 2008, <http://euobserver.com/22/26754>, (accessed April 18, 2012).

¹⁴ *The Daily Star*, “Israel says Hezbollah using West Africa as Powerbase, February 22, 2012, <http://www.dailystar.com.lb/News/Middle-East/2012/Feb-22/164207-israel-says-hezbollah-using-west-africa-as-powerbase.aspx#axzz1vboxyrCm> (accessed April 18, 2012).

¹⁵ Ibid.

media reports have linked the financing of Hezbollah to businessmen in West Africa who have allegedly aided the resistance group in drug smuggling operations.

For example in December 2011, *The New York Times* reported a U.S. investigation into the Lebanese Canadian Bank (LCB). The United States Treasury Department charged the LCB with money laundering and financing a terrorist organization. The Treasury Department investigation uncovered a complex scheme involving several businessmen known identified as Hezbollah supporters which used the bank for their businesses based in West Africa. Supporters facilitated the movement of drug profits through a trading network that spanned Latin America, West Africa and the U.S. It also determined that Hezbollah generated revenue from the network and that the bank provided financial services to Iranian government officials.¹⁶ Also in 2011, a Lebanese drug kingpin linked to Hezbollah was indicted in U.S. federal court for coordinating the sale of cocaine to Los Zetas by using West Africa to launder drug money estimated up to \$200 million a month.¹⁷

Boko Haram

Boko Haram is a Nigerian-based jihadist Muslim sect founded by Mohammed Yusuf in 2001.¹⁸ Boko Haram means “Western education is sacrilege or a sin.”¹⁹ The organization seeks to establish sharia or religious law and abolish the Nigerian secular

¹⁶ “Hezbollah,” *New York Times*, April 16, 2012, <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/h/hezbollah/index.html> (accessed April 20, 2012).

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ “Nigeria: Boko-Haram and the U.S. Counter-Terrorism Partnership,” *All Africa.com*, September 11, 2011, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201109121823.html>. (accessed April 24, 2012)

¹⁹ Michael Olugbode, “Nigeria: We Are Responsible for Borno Killings, Says Boko Haram”, *allAfrica.com*, February 2, 2011, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201102030036.html>. (accessed April 24, 2012)

system of government.²⁰ Recently the group has increased its attacks on government officials and institutions along with violent attacks on Christians throughout the country. In 2011, Boko Haram was been responsible for more than 450 killings in Nigeria.²¹ This extreme level of violence has had an effect on the U.S. policy as after the Christmas 2011 bombings on Christians, when President Obama's issued a statement that confirmed that the U.S. and Nigeria were cooperating at a senior level against the terrorist group.²² The efficacy remains to be seen.

The United States currently assesses Boko Haram as internal threat to Nigeria with limited potential to threaten regional stability. The group also appeared to have allied with al Qaeda. In September 2011, General Carter F. Ham, USAFRICOM Commander, stated that he was concerned about three African terrorist groups: al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb operating in the Sahel region, Al Shabaab in Somalia, and Boko Haram's in Nigeria. These groups publicly voiced their intent to target Westerners or Americans. General Ham expressed concern that these three organizations intended to collaborate and synchronize their efforts. This collaboration increases regional threats increase exponentially in West Africa.

In response to Boko Haram's increased attacks in Nigeria, the United States House of Representatives Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence urged the Obama Administration and U.S. intelligence community to focus on Boko Haram's threat

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "Dozens killed in Nigeria clashes," *Al Jazeera*, December 24, 2011
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/africa/2011/12/20111224124241652788.html>, (access April 24, 2012).

²² Statement of the Press Secretary on Nigeria, The White House, December 25, 2011,
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/12/25/statement-press-secretary-nigeria> (accessed April 24, 2012).

to regional stability and United States interests.²³ USAFRICOM has met with the government of Nigeria along with other African, European and Middle Eastern governments to address the problem. Also General Owoye Andrew Azazi, Nigeria's National Security Adviser, met in 2010 with then-CIA Director Leon Panetta and in 2011 with General Ham to discuss the threat posed by Boko Haram on Nigeria's security. In April 2011, Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson for Bureau of Africa Affairs in his testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee highlighted his concern for security in West Africa by saying "the presence of terrorist groups and drug traffickers in the Sahara, and the ascendance of drug trafficking in countries such as Guinea-Bissau and Mozambique is a challenge."²⁴

The connection between the two high level organizations and transnational drug traffickers constitutes a significant threat to the United States which has been understated as a security challenge. This condition calls for swift and decisive action from the United States to prevent this emerging threat from evolving similar as it did in Mexico.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Johnnie Carson, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of African Affairs testimony before Senate Foreign Relations Committee Subcommittee on African Affairs, FY2012 Budget Request for U.S. Policies on Africa, April 14, 2011 <http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2011/161202.htm> (accessed February 12, 2012)

CHAPTER 5

U.S. COUNTERNARCOTICS POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Although West African security issues are not on the top tier of U.S. foreign policy priorities, U.S. strategic documents reflect a shift towards increased engagement with Africa, both at the state and regional level. U.S. policymakers acknowledge that a number of key areas affecting stability in West Africa, such as governance, security, and social challenges, directly influence American strategic interests particularly as they relates to energy security.

One long held security concern for the United States has been a counternarcotics effort to eradicate the production and transit of cocaine and heroin. Over the past decade, the effort has been aimed at interdicting and disrupting the flow of drugs entering the United States as well as eradicating crops at their source in Latin American and Afghanistan. The U.S. has focused on assisting countries in building their own capacity to conduct counternarcotics operations. Unfortunately, American policymakers were misguided in their strategic effort to combat illegal drug trade. For years, the main effort has been directed against drugs originating from South America and Afghanistan. Africa was perceived as a peripheral contributor to the drug trade. As a result, there was only a limited effort to assist West African nations in building their capability to prevent the expansion of the illicit drug trade that was now influencing the region.

A U.S. policymakers response to the rise in West African drug trafficking is in the formative stages. The Department of State, Department of Defense, and other U.S. agencies are evaluating and assessing the problem to identify short-term solutions, such as expanding drug monitoring and interdicting efforts in West Africa. Long-term efforts

are designed to strengthen local capacity to combat drugs in the region. As indicated in chapters 3 and 4, Some U.S. policymakers argue that the rise in drug trafficking in West Africa has been so rapid and large that it is an indication that global drug trafficking patterns are in flux. The region is now a significant part of the TTDT and must receive heightened attention and a clear plan of action.

The nature of a counternarcotics strategy should be joint, interagency, and multinational, thus requiring a lead agency to coordinate and integrate the various components to foster unity of effort. The State Department, along with its country teams, host nation law enforcement agencies, and host nation militaries are currently the major players in accomplishing the counternarcotics goals identified. A counternarcotics strategy requires significant commitments from West African states, the United States, and their appropriate, international partners.

U.S. Department of State Counternarcotics Strategy

The United States Department of State (DOS) plays a vital role in promoting good governance and building strong governmental institutions in West Africa. U.S. foreign policy recognizes that empowering people and achieving development requires more than donations and open ended funding. The policy needs to support a commitment to peace, security, democracy, as well as economic development. Although the DOS is the primarily a political organization designed for policy and negotiation only, it leads the management of security dependent issues, in particular the threatening problem of illegal drug supply reduction. Through U.S. ambassadors and the country teams, the DOS executes programs designed to increase the partner nation's counterdrug resolve and capabilities.

The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) is the organization within the DOS responsible for developing and implementing international programs and policies in support of the National Drug Control Strategy. INL programs support two of the Department of State's strategic goals: (1) to reduce the entry of illegal drugs into the United States; and (2) to minimize the impact of international crime on the United States and its citizens. Counternarcotics and anticrime programs also complement counterterrorism efforts, both directly and indirectly, by promoting modernization of and supporting operations by foreign criminal justice systems and law enforcement agencies charged with the counterterrorism mission.¹

In September 2011, INL launched a new partnership program with several West African nations to address the increased threat of drug trafficking and Organized Crime in West Africa. The State Department initiated a five year, \$60 million assistance program called the West Africa Cooperative Security Initiative (WACSI) in November 2011 with DOD contributing \$31 million or over half the total. The program targets drug trafficking and transnational organized crime by focusing on strengthening West African law enforcement and judicial systems.

WACSI is a whole-of-government approach in close coordination with African and international partners to seek opportunities to complement and enable regional and national initiatives. The purpose of the WACSI is to enhance citizen security and to develop the capacity to combat transnational organized crime by building accountable institutions, establishing the legal and policy frameworks to counter transnational

¹ U.S. Department of States, Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, "West Africa Cooperation Security Initiative," <http://www.state.gov/j/inl/> (accessed April 22, 2012).

organized crime, strengthening security operations, enhancing justice operations, and addressing the socio-economic causes and consequences of transnational organized crime. The WASCI focused on five pillars: 1) Build accountable institutions, 2) Established legal policy and framework, 3) Strengthen security operations, 4) Reinforce justice operations, and 5) Address socio-economic causes.² The initiatives will implement programs to assist West African countries in combating transnational drug traffickers.

1. Technical assistance and capacity building to help governments and civil societies develop the skills to combat impunity

2. Technical assistance drafting laws and policies, assisting in the process of getting these laws enacted, and creating awareness.

3. Investing in elite counternarcotics units, operational training and equipping of accountable institutions, and technical assistance to build basic law enforcement skills and institutional capacity.

4. Technical assistance to build the capacity of prosecutors and judges to prosecute and adjudicate complex criminal.

5. Drug demand reduction and raising public awareness of the threat of criminal activities.

The United States Government intends for WACSI to help achieve an end state in which West African partners effectively combat TTDT and become key contributing partners to regional and global security. In order to reach this desired end state, an initial focus will be on laying and strengthening a foundation of legitimate and accountable governance and the basic legal frameworks to support an investment in enhanced operational capabilities. Efforts should also seek to identify and capitalize on the socio-economic causes and consequences of transnational criminal activities.

² Ibid.

This initiative presents a bureaucratic challenge particular in the Sahel region, which is a major area of concern; because Africa has been subsumed under two bureaus and the continent has never been a priority for the DOS. The North African Sahelian states of Libya, Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco are under the responsibility of the Department of State Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA), whereas Nigeria, Chad, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Mauritania come under the responsibility of Bureau of African Affairs (AF). The Department of Defense, under the leadership of United States Africa Command, has no such limitation. USAFRICOM has promoted security cooperation among both northern and western states in the region.

The Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs is a division under the Department of State that is responsible for U.S. foreign policy and diplomatic relations with North Africa states (Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia), and the Middle East consists of thirteen countries.³ NEA is focused on the crisis in Syria, Iran's pursuit of weapon of mass destruction, rebuilding Iraq, peace in the region, ending state-sponsored terrorism and encouraging political and economic reform in North Africa. The bureau does not list countering drugs as effort or a goal in North Africa.

The Bureau of African Affairs is a division in the Department of State that oversees the development and management of U.S. policy concerning sub-Saharan Africa. The Bureau has five pillars that serve as the foundation of U.S. policy toward Africa--the fifth priority focuses on drug trafficking:⁴

³ Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestinian Territories, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

⁴ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs: "Our Mission," <http://www.state.gov/p/af/> (accessed February 12, 2012)

1. Support for democracy and the strengthening of democratic institutions on the continent, including free, fair, and transparent elections.
2. Supporting African economic growth and development.
3. Conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution.
4. Supporting Presidential initiatives such as the Global Health Initiative, Feed the Future, and the Global Climate Change Initiative.
5. Working with African nations on transnational issues such as drug smuggling, money laundering, illicit arms, and trafficking in persons.⁵

The bureau's preferred approach to all of these challenges is to work through African security and judicial institutions and develop their capacity rather than rely on direct (and potentially) costly U.S. involvement.

While the WASCI is a good start, it is shortsighted. When the U.S. conducts counterdrug operations, the impact of those operating is not confined to a region. Transnational drug traffickers operate in West Africa crossover DOS regional boundaries of the NEA and AF. Drug traffickers and terrorist groups have significant influence in both regions. For example, they have established hubs in Guinea-Bissau and Nigeria, have safe havens in ungoverned spaces in Mali and Mauritania, and safe passage through Morocco.

U.S. Department of Defense Counter Drug Strategy

The Department of Defense supports the National Drug Control Strategy by providing assistance to local, state, federal, and foreign agencies to confront the drug trade and narco-terrorism directly. DOD support for law enforcement includes detecting and monitoring drug trafficking, sharing information, and helping countries build their capacity to confront drug trafficking. DOD counternarcotics efforts are also focused on

⁵ Ibid.

maintaining force readiness through demand reduction programs for the United States Armed Forces.⁶

The President, with Congressional approval, directed the DOD in 1989 to task Combatant Commanders to develop a counterdrug strategy for the implementation of drug interdiction missions. "Congressional support for using the military in counterdrug (CD) efforts culminated with the passage of the FY 1989 National Defense Authorization Act. This act imposed specific responsibilities upon the DOD in support of the national CD effort and was the basis for many of the specific CD missions that have evolved."⁷

The two primary responsibilities assigned to DOD were:⁸

- 1) Act as the single lead agency for detecting and monitoring aerial and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the U.S.
- 2) Integrate the command, control, communications, and technical intelligence assets of the U.S. that are dedicated to interdicting the movement of illegal drugs into the U.S.

The Department of Defense strategy for achieving these goals are reducing threats that flow from ungoverned areas of weak and fragile states, countering humanitarian tragedies that often arise from conflict, ethnic tensions and extreme poverty, working with U.S. partners to build capacity and reduce threats by promoting reform and professionalism in African militaries, and by fostering stability and assisting in reconstruction.

In addition, the Department of Defense has specific responsibility as the lead federal agency for aerial and maritime detection and monitoring (D&M). D&M

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Counterdrug Operations*, Joint Publication 3-07.4 (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 13, 2007), 1-1-2.

⁸ Ibid.

operations are missions conducted to detect and track the land, aerial, and maritime transit of illegal drugs into the U.S. or West Africa. Drug interdiction is a multiphase, multi environment, and interagency activity in which the DOD has significant general responsibilities.⁹

According to the *United States Joint Counterdrug Operations Publication* the Combatant Commanders (CCDRs) are responsible for planning and executing DOD counter drug within their areas of responsibilities (AORs). This is usually done by developing a concept of operations and then a campaign plan, commonly drawing on cooperating country requests and U.S. embassy personnel recommendations. The plan incorporates all the appropriate DOD mission categories into a coordinated program to reduce the supply of illegal drugs either directly or in a supporting role to interagency operations.¹⁰

Summary

The United States National Counterdrug Strategy is focused on reducing the demand and the supply for illegal drugs with over 48 government agencies playing a role in accomplishing these goals. Only a comprehensive planning process at the strategic (national), operational and tactical (regional) levels can provide the means to reach this goal. Through its Combatant Commands, the Military Departments, and the Defense Agencies, DOD provides unique military platforms, personnel, systems, and capabilities that support federal law enforcement agencies and foreign security forces involved in counternarcotics missions. The DOD invests in building capacity through training,

⁹ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Counterdrug Operations*, Joint Publication 3-07.4 (Washington,DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, June 13, 2007), I-1-2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, I-7-10.

equipment, information sharing and infrastructure to enable these partners to take ever-greater responsibility for their security. An illicit drug trade has existed in West Africa for decades; however, the terrorists and transnational drug traffickers (TTDT) responsible for the drug trade have adapted to the post 9/11 strategic environment. The United States now faces a more capable enemy that is elusive, sophisticated, violent, resourceful, and globally connected. This emerging threat in most cases is more capable than most West Africa nations such as Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Niger. TTDT are a significant security challenge for these nations because they lack the security capability to effectively combat the threat. Many West African countries require external support to build security capacity. USAFRICOM is responsible for strengthening the defense capabilities of African states and regional organizations. The following chapter discusses USAFRICOM's role in deterring and defeating transnational threats in order to provide a security environment conducive to good governance and development.

CHAPTER 6

UNITED STATES AFRICA COMMAND

While the United States focused on combating illicit drug trade in Latin America and Mexico and defeating al Qaeda, drug cartels and terrorists shifted their activities to West Africa. In early 2003, Osama bin Laden publicly encouraged al Qaeda and its followers to make Nigeria a global priority.¹¹ Transnational drug traffickers have expanded their global reach to West Africa.¹² Latin America and Mexico drug cartels are working with terrorists organizations in the region to smuggle drugs into Europe. The scope and scale have caused international concern that the West African illicit drug trade could follow a similar path to that of Mexico's violent encounters with organized criminals.¹³

The United States Africa Command represents an unprecedented strategic approach to align foreign policy and security cooperation with a sustained level of engagement to build capability and capacity in Africa. Since its establishment in 2007, it has authority and responsibility for counterdrug activities that threaten the United States. The command was established to provide a unified focus for U.S. security concerns and enhance interagency cooperation by emphasizing diplomacy, economic development, and military defense. It also has the authority under global war of terrorism to support the

¹¹ David L. Goldwyn and J. Stephen Morrison, "Promoting Transparency in the African Oil Sector: A Report of the CSIS Task Force on Rising U.S. Energy Stakes in Africa," Center for Strategic and International Studies Africa Program, March 2004, http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/0403_african_oil_sector.pdf14, (accessed March 27, 2012)

¹² Gail Wannenburg, "Organized crime in West Africa", *African Security Review* 14(4), 2005: 1-22

¹³ Laura Ploch, *Africa Command: U.S. Strategic Interests and the Role of the U.S. Military in Africa*, (Congressional Research Service), Washington, D.C.: 2011)

DOD counter terrorism campaign plan. This new command challenges the state department's multi-level counter drug organization. The opportunities for conflict, waste, and misdirection of resources are obvious to the DOS. With every challenge, there exist as many opportunities for USAFRICOM to build a strategic partnership with West African countries that provides diplomatic, economic development, and security assistance to critical partners who are capable of assisting failed or failing states with the aim of stabilizing the region.

As envisioned by the Department of Defense (DOD), USAFRICOM aims to promote U.S. strategic objectives and protect U.S. interests in the region by working with African states and regional organizations to help strengthen their defense capabilities so that they are better able to contribute to regional stability and security.¹⁴ Although USAFRICOM's mission statement has evolved since the command was first announced, DOD officials have broadly suggested that the command's mission is to promote U.S. strategic objectives and protect U.S. interests in the region by working with African partners to strengthen their defense capabilities so that they are better able to contribute to regional stability and security.¹⁵

USAFRICOM works with U.S. diplomacy and development agencies on activities ranging from maritime security to pandemic response efforts on the African continent. The 2008 *National Defense Strategy* cites USAFRICOM as exemplifying a whole-of-government approach to achieving common goals. As USAFRICOM matures its approach to security cooperation with a persistent, sustained level of engagement, it will

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ AFRICOM FAQs, U.S. Africa Command Home, <http://www.africom.mil/AfricomFAQs.asp> (accessed October 12, 2011).

facilitate the development of African land forces and institutions in a region of growing strategic importance. President Barack Obama quickly reinforced the role of USAFRICOM when addressing Africans in the first months of his administration, “Let me be clear. Our Africa Command is focused not on establishing a foothold on the continent, but on confronting common challenges to advance the security of America, Africa, and the world...I can promise you this: America will be with you every step of the way.”¹⁶ Successfully confronting these common challenges in Africa will require agreement on a comprehensive approach, one that acknowledges that sustainable security depends on commitment from the whole of government with clear direction under a single lead agency.

In order to combat the ever-evolving threat of TTDT, the U.S. and its partners must redefine how they view and mitigate threats, and understand how crime and terrorism are viewed as two interconnected components of the same threat. In terms of the U.S. specifically, a need exists to improve cooperation between law enforcement, the military, and the intelligence community by increasing collection efficiency and sharing intelligence.

At the present time, U.S. Africa Command conducts robust training efforts in West Africa with military and civilian law enforcement personnel in airport interdiction; however, these efforts are complicated by West African states lacking of domestic security architecture, along with insufficient equipment.¹⁷ Until last year, Guinea did not have a single scanner at its international airports. Nigeria only started using body scanners at international airports in 2010 after one of its citizens was detained for

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Nancy Brune, “The Brazil–Africa Narco Nexus,” *Americas Quarterly*, October 1, 2011, <http://www.americasquarterly.org/brune> (accessed March 22, 2012).

suspicion of trying to blow up a U.S. bound passenger plane. In addition, USAFRICOM is standing up a threat finance cell to coordinate with U.S. government agencies and partner nations to counter financial networks that finance criminal organizations, a skill that is vital in intercepting money laundering.

The USAFRICOM is assisting several West African countries build a capacity to patrol their coast line, even though most of the countries along the coast do not have navies. In recent years, the U.S. military has expanded its naval presence in the Gulf of Guinea. The U.S. Navy has increased the number of patrols in the region to almost a continuous presence. As part of USAFRICOM's theater security cooperation, the United States Naval Forces Europe-Africa developed the Africa Partnership Station (APS) program. APS is a U.S. Naval Forces Europe-Africa maritime international initiative that cooperates with international partners to improve the capacity of West African states to conduct maritime safety and security along its territorial and coastal waters. It is a strategic program designed to develop and build the skills, expertise and professionalism of African navies, coast guards and mariners. APS goal is to improve the ability of the nations involved to extend the rule of law within their territorial waters and exclusive economic zones and better combat illegal fishing, human smuggling, drug trafficking, oil theft and piracy.

The promise of USAFRICOM is that it will generate more consistent dialogue with African governments and greater understanding within the U.S. military establishment on a diverse and complex set of African security questions. The challenge for USAFRICOM is ensuring that U.S. engagement on security issues is better integrated

with diplomatic and development priorities and that nonmilitary security challenges receive adequate resources.

Notwithstanding their budget constraints and institutional challenges, many African countries are taking a tougher stance against drug trafficking. The Nigerian National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) has increased interdiction efforts, particularly at the airports. Earlier this year, the leader of Gambia's National Drug Enforcement Agency warned that it would carry out a "tougher and more aggressive" fight against drug traffickers and reiterated Gambia's "double zero tolerance" on drugs.

West African nations are beginning to recognize the value of regional cooperation and are poised and ready to benefit from USAFRICOM engagement. Last fall, Gambia hosted a regional forum on illegal drug trafficking and organized crime. In 2010, delegates from 34 countries gathered at the Fourth Session of the African Union Ministerial Conference on Crime Prevention and Drug Control to discuss the harmonization of legislation across countries and the creation of a coordination, collection and data processing organization to assess the drug and crime threat. Earlier this year, African Union lawyers from Angola and Mozambique reportedly agreed to assist Guinea-Bissau in drafting legislation to combat the drug trade. In July 2011, police chiefs from several West African countries met in Guinea to discuss countering national and transnational crime via simultaneous police operations and to review the status of efforts to harmonize national legislation on transnational crimes. USAFRICOM can build on these positive steps towards combating the transnational drug trafficking by integrating these programs and initiatives into its theater security cooperation.

USAFRICOM has an advantage of being able to mobilize African countries at the regional level centered on issues of common concern, whether humanitarian disaster response, maritime security or counterterrorism. The State Department, by contrast has no structure through which to engage at the region level, and USAID's funding for regionally based programs is limited because of security concern especially in northern part of Nigerian and the Sahel region. USAFRICOM's ability to reach throughout Africa and its ability to marshal resources, make it a natural choice to organize and lead the whole of government approach to address transnational drug traffickers and terrorist in West Africa.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The corrosive influence of drug money to corrupt government officials both civil and military is a strategic threat to achieving the goals in West Africa. One can argue the emerging threat of terrorists and transnational drug traffickers (TTDT) fits into Clausewitz's description of limited war.¹ Warfare in Africa tends to be limited because African governments lack the capability to fight absolute wars. This has caused the center of gravity of most military operations to shift from the destruction of the enemy to the control of a relevant civilian population. African governments need to recalibrate their thinking and focus on connecting with the people while taking actions to defeating TTDTs. This requires the use of irregular strategies of warfare

West African nations are fighting a limited war against terrorists and transnational drug traffickers seeking to cause instability in the region to achieve their objectives. In July 2011 the Nigerian government created a joint task force consisted of members for the Nigerian Army, Navy, Air Force, Police and State Security Services. The task force is led by military to fight terror being conducted by Boko Haram. While Nigeria security possesses operational capable to confront the threat, TTDT have exploited Guinea Bissau security weakness and the country slide toward instability has been swift and precipitous. Since a limited war is being waged in the region, USAFRICOM is the obvious solution in assisting countries in the region to build capacity and develop a strategy to defeat TTDT.

¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Edited by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1984.

The operational design framework serves as a guide to develop an understanding of a strategy to combat international terrorists and transnational drug traffickers working together in a marriage of convenience in West and North Africa. The operational design is useful because it assists planners in understanding the strategic context in which to frame the problem of combating narco-terrorism in Africa. This chapter addresses the practicality of an operational design to enable United States Africa Command to develop a whole of government strategy to address the growing concerns of narco-terrorism in West Africa that extends to North Africa and beyond. This strategy provides a general guide to be used by both military and interagency planners.

USAFRICOM planners must consider during the planning process how to achieve unity of effort. USAFRICOM, as the agency in charge of the theater strategy, is responsible for the success or failure of the theater strategy planning efforts. In today's strategic environment to achieve the United States' strategic objectives in West Africa requires unity of effort among U.S. government agencies and partners as expressed in common goals, and clear, concise and simple command and control from the designated lead agency. In counter narco-terrorism operations with the numerous agencies involved, unity of effort is achieved by coordination and cooperation rather than direct exercising of authority. Success requires the interagency working together to integrate capabilities and resources. This cooperation to create unity of effort cannot be overstated.

The proposed counternarcotics strategy expands on the West Africa Cooperative Security Initiative by focusing primarily on strengthening regional counterdrug capacities. USAFRICOM invests in building capacity through training, equipment,

information sharing and infrastructure to enable West African's states to take ever-greater responsibility for their security.

The first step in designing the CN strategy for West Africa is defining the desired end state. USAFRICOM Commander's end state is guided by strategic documents. National strategic direction issued in National Security Directives, Congressional requests, and the President's National Drug Control Strategy, developed by the Office of National Drug Control Office, provide broad national guidance for U.S. government agencies. From that guidance, the SECDEF issued the DOD guidance through the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics.

The United States Counternarcotics Strategy for West Africa should seek to protect and secure the local population from the threat of terrorists and transnational drug traffickers. It seeks to stabilize the region by assisting West and North African governments to foster sustainable solutions that prevent terrorists and transnational drug traffickers from exploiting weak governance and ungoverned spaces. The CN strategy should seek to deny opportunities to transnational drug traffickers and to build capacity for self-reliant and effective counternarcotics law enforcement entities. In order to reach this desired end state, an initial focus will be on laying and strengthening a foundation of security institutions to secure coastal and land borders to interdict terrorist and transnational drug traffickers at the point of entry.

Once West Africa states are secure and capable of controlling their territory, the governments of West Africa states can begin to provide government services for their citizens and capitalize on the region vast natural resources. As West African's governments expand control of their territory, they will make it more difficult for the

terrorists and transnational drug traffickers to target disenfranchised and discontented citizens. Once security is established, West Africa states will be able to take advantage of foreign investment opportunities to develop their economic and become active participants in the global economy.

The CN strategy has two primary objectives that will contribute directly to achieving the end state: 1) Disrupting, dismantling, defeating the terrorist and transnational drug traffickers' nexus; and 2) connecting the people of West Africa to their governments. The first objective is to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat narcotics-terrorists nexus. The purpose is to break the link between terrorists and transnational drug traffickers and reduce the support terrorists operating in the region receive from illicit drugs entering West Africa. The goal focuses not only on disrupting the flow of illegal drugs, but on preventing the flow of money to terrorist groups such as al Qaeda, Hezbollah, and other violent extreme organizations. Also it is essential that these non-state actors be denied support structures that connect terrorists and transnational drug traffickers.

As part of accomplishing the objective these desired effects must be achieved: 1) West Africa is no longer a safe haven for TTD. 2) West African countries have the capacity to deter future threats of TTD. In order to accomplish this objective three decisive points have been identified. These decisive points are: 1) Building interdiction units and specialized investigative agents, 2) Enabling countries to disrupt the enemy funding, 3) Developing intelligence fusion and collection capacity. Planners must identify key countries to build security capability by enhancing the capacity and sustainability of interdiction and specialized investigative units within the counter

narcotics law enforcement agencies mentored by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and other agencies. The nexus of terrorist and transnational drug traffickers is the money. It is the source of their power; the center of gravity that makes it a marriage of convenience. Therefore, it is essential to support threat finance disruption efforts in West Africa by enhancing intelligence coordination among national and regional organizations. Expansion of this capability to smaller linked threat finance units throughout the region will enable countries to be more effective in tracking down illicit networks. USAFRICOM must assist countries with developing counternarcotics intelligence collection that include campaign planning, assessment, targeting, and fusion capabilities at regional and national levels.

The second objective is connecting Africans to their governments. USAFRICOM planners must assist West African governments in developing a counternarcotics campaign plan that supports, and is fully integrated into, the civilian-military campaign plan. Corruption fueled by illicit drug trade reduces West African support for their governments, and corruption slows capacity building across all institutions from the local to national government levels.

USAFRICOM is the only entity capable of directing this design. By acting as lead agency for the whole of government, USAFRICOM uses the design to create unity of effort by applying resources along three lines of effort (security, governance and strategy communication) directed at achieving key decisive points supporting two objectives that move USAFRICOM closer to its Phase 0 end state.

CONCLUSION

Security is the number-one prerequisite for success in West Africa with respect to combating the emerging narco-terrorism threat. Without it, West African government cannot be stabilized for economic development; nor can regional, U.S. or international counternarcotics policies be effective. Unfortunately, West African states have limited capacity to confront these challenges alone and require outside assistance from the international community. West African states are generally too weak to resist the capabilities of the drug traffickers and their terrorist allies that both have global reach. The region's strategic location, porous borders, weak law enforcement, and government corruptions all contribute to the problem. West Africa shipping lanes, harbors, and ports are critical components of an integrated maritime global transportation system linked to the U.S. and allied maritime traffic flows and ports. While the region's waterways represent a major transit route for international commerce, the waters are also used by drug traffickers, terrorists, and criminals engaged in a range of operations counter to stability in the region. The Department of State lead effort falls short in addressing the nature of the limited war in West Africa against terrorist and transnational threat. USAFRICOM is the obvious choice to lead a whole of government effort to assist West Africans in the conduct of the limited war they are waging against TTDT.

The growing cooperation between transnational drug traffickers and terrorists, particularly dangerous terrorist in West Africa is a significant threat to the United States interests and security. These interests include humanitarian, security, economic, and long-term access to energy are at risk as narco-terrorists seek to exploit the economic and political distress in the region. It is the partnership between drug traffickers and terrorist organizations like al Qaeda that pose a significant threat due to illegal drugs undermining economic development and good governance.

Up until now, the only United States agency capable of dealing with engagement and counter drug was the Department of State (DOS). DOS built a large scale effort to deal with trafficking. In cooperation with its partners, the U.S. must assist responsible and reliable West African nations and regional organizations to prevent drug cartels and terrorists from taking advantage of the region's ungoverned spaces. A failure to counter this threat with sustainable capabilities and capacity increases the probability for state failure and regional instability.

After 2007, USAFRICOM with its new look of a combined military-civilian approach brings to West Africa several new capabilities: security assistance, counterdrug, and counter terrorism. Department of Defense has given Combatant Commanders enormous power and authority to combat drugs and terrorists and promote stability in Africa through sustained engagement to build security capacity.

USAFRICOM must now become the lead agent for counterdrug and counterterrorism, and development in coordination and cooperation with the Department of State, and United States for International Development within its theater campaign plan. A comprehensive strategy is required for attacking transnational drug traffickers

and terrorists while assisting and supporting countries in West Africa to develop capabilities to resist the threat to stability and economic growth in the region.

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